



**July 2008**

**Key Points:**

- Replaces previous version dated July 2007

## **Leisure and Learning**

This factsheet is aimed at people aged 60 and over.

This factsheet describes the situation in England. Readers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales should contact their respective national Age Concern offices for information specific to where they live.

**The Scottish Helpline for Older People – Age Concern**

**Scotland, tel:** 0845 125 9732 (local call rates) Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm; website: [www.olderpeoplescotland.co.uk](http://www.olderpeoplescotland.co.uk);

**Age Concern Cymru**, Ty John Pathy, Units 13/14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff CF24 5PJ, tel: 029 2043 1555 (national call rate), website: [www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk);

**Age Concern Northern Ireland**, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7 1NR, tel: 028 9032 5055 (national call rate), Monday to Friday 10am – 12pm and 2pm - 4pm, website: [www.ageconcernni.org](http://www.ageconcernni.org).

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# 1. Lifelong learning

Much of our learning is informal, but at times we may want a more structured learning programme to achieve a particular level of expertise. This may be as simple as following a language or business studies course on television (see night time programming for many learning options) or by enrolling at a college with a course and exams to follow.

## 1.1 Informal learning

Terrestrial television (ie, BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5) offers many educational programmes, usually during the day or at night, rather than at prime time. The Open University broadcasts programmes on BBC channels, including the digital BBC channels. See [www.open2.net](http://www.open2.net) for details of BBC/Open University programmes. Also see [www.bbc.co.uk/education](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education) for details of the BBC's other educational services. For details of learning programmes on Channel 4, see [www.channel4learning.net](http://www.channel4learning.net).

You can get digital television channels in a number of ways; either by subscribing to a satellite or cable service, or by buying a Freeview box. See Age Concern's Information Sheet 29 *Digital Switchover – Questions and Answers* for more information about changing to digital television. There are a number of dedicated educational channels available through digital television, but many of these are only available through subscription services and not through Freeview.

**University of the Third Age** has more than 650 groups and over 200,000 members in the UK. Learning is carried out in an informal environment, for fun rather than to gain a qualification. The learning is based on members sharing their expertise, and there are no assessments. Subjects include languages, music, photography, philosophy and computing. You may want to set up a local group in your area. Contact U3A at The Old Municipal Buildings 19, East Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1QE, tel: 020 8466 6139, website: [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk).

## 1.2 Finding a course

### Learndirect

If you want to follow a more formal course, Learndirect could be a good place to start. Learndirect is a government agency which runs a free national advice line about all areas of learning.

It can provide details of local courses in your area, both those run by Learndirect itself and those run by other learning providers. It also operates a network of learning centres where you can use the internet facilities to follow courses online, with support from a tutor. If you have access to the internet at home, you can follow Learndirect courses at home. There are over 550 different Learndirect courses on subjects including IT, business, basic skills and languages. The advantages of e-learning (following a course on the internet) are that you can learn at your own speed, and at times to suit you.

For your nearest centre or details of local courses, tel: 0800 101 901 (free call), Monday to Friday, 9am - 8pm. For advice on careers or learning, tel: 0800 101 900 (free call), website: [www.learndirect.co.uk](http://www.learndirect.co.uk).

Learndirect also provides advice in different languages on the following free call numbers:

Bengali/Sylheti: 0800 093 1444

Farsi: 0800 093 1116

French: 0800 093 1115

Gujarati: 0800 093 1119

Polish: 0800 093 1114

Punjabi: 0800 093 1333

Somali: 0800 093 1555

Urdu: 0800 093 1118

Welsh: 0800 100 900

### **Basic skills courses**

If you want to improve your reading, writing or maths, there are plenty of courses available. These are often known as basic skills courses and are usually free of charge. You can contact your local adult or community college directly, or you can contact Learndirect for information about local courses and to find the most appropriate level of course for you. There may be local courses available in community venues other than colleges.

### **Open learning**

Open learning means that you learn at your own pace and convenience rather than a course with fixed attendance times. Colleges frequently run open learning courses where the course has set units but you do them as and when you choose. Many courses don't involve attendance at classes at all.

This is called distance learning and can be through correspondence or using the internet. See the list of course providers below for details of how to find open learning opportunities.

### 1.3 Course Providers

You can contact your local adult or community college directly for details of their courses, such as art courses, languages, or computer skills. There will usually be a fee for these types of courses.

**City & Guilds** runs a programme of residential learning breaks, usually lasting between two days and one week, at venues throughout the U.K. They also run day schools and study breaks abroad. The courses available cover a wide range of subjects, for example, astronomy, natural history, art history, watercolour, Tai Chi, creative writing or wine. The courses are usually run in attractive locations such as historic country houses. You can search for a course on the website: [www.timetolearn.org.uk](http://www.timetolearn.org.uk). If you do not have access to the internet, you can order a copy of the Time to Learn Directory by calling 020 7902 1200. The brochure is printed twice a year and costs £7.95, plus £2.50 p&p.

**Hillcroft College** is a residential college with the aim of helping women who may have previously faced educational or social disadvantage to progress into higher education or vocational training. It offers free or low cost residential courses to women in a supportive environment, at various levels. Courses include basic skills such as literacy and numeracy; assertiveness and confidence building courses; creative writing; courses for carers; and courses in English if this is not your first language.

The college also runs courses designed specifically for women over age 55, either as an introduction to learning and an opportunity to build on and develop new skills such as reading or computer skills; or an opportunity to carry out a research project in an area of particular interest.

Basic skills courses are free of charge. There is a charge of £15 for other courses for students who have never previously attended a UK institution for higher education, and who are in receipt of certain social security benefits. Accommodation and meals are also free for these students.

Fees and accommodation costs vary for students who do not meet these requirements. Contact Hillcroft College, South Bank, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6DF, tel: 020 8399 2688, website: [www.hillcroft.ac.uk](http://www.hillcroft.ac.uk).

**Workers' Educational Association (WEA)** is a national voluntary movement which runs over 10,000 evening classes and residential courses around the UK on a wide range of topics. There are nine regional offices which can provide details of local courses and information about whether help is available for course fees. For general enquiries or to find contact details for your region contact WEA Corporate Services, 3rd Floor, 70 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4HB, tel: 020 7426 3450, website: [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk).

### **Open and distance learning**

The following organisations can provide information about open and distance learning opportunities:

**Association of British Correspondence Colleges (ABCC)**, PO Box 17926, London SW19 3WB, tel: 020 8544 9559, website: [www.homestudy.org.uk](http://www.homestudy.org.uk). Provides lists of colleges and courses.

**National Extension College (NEC)**, Michael Young Centre, Purbeck Rd, Cambridge CB2 8HN, tel: 01223 400200, website: [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk). A not-for-profit organisation which runs over 100 home study courses.

**Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODLQC)**, 16 Park Crescent, London W1B 1AH, tel: 020 7612 7090, website: [www.odlqc.org.uk](http://www.odlqc.org.uk). This is an independent body which runs an accreditation scheme for open and distance learning. The council provides details of accredited courses and providers.

**Open College of the Arts**, Freepost SF10678, Barnsley S75 1JN, tel: 0800 731 2116 (free call), website: [www.oqa-uk.com](http://www.oqa-uk.com). OCA is an educational charity which offers home study courses, including garden design, creative writing, and photography. You will be provided with course materials and professional tuition, allowing you to work at your own pace. Tuition can either be face-to-face, or by post. For a course brochure call or write to the Registration department at the above address.

**Open University**, PO Box 197, Milton Keynes MK7 6BJ, tel: 0870 333 4340 (national call rate), website: [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk). The Open University's undergraduate level courses do not require any entry qualifications. Over a third of people starting these courses have qualifications below conventional university entry requirements. Programmes on television, residential schools and tutorials accompany the materials. For course information and advice, telephone or write to The Open University.

## 1.4 Higher Education

Under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, universities and colleges must not discriminate against students or potential students on grounds of their age. This means they should not take age into account when offering someone a place. There are a number of routes into university education, even if you don't have formal academic qualifications. Many degree courses can be taken with a 'foundation year' which is an extra year of study which qualifies you to continue on to the actual degree course.

Access courses are another type of course which can be taken in preparation for moving onto a degree course. Access courses cover subject knowledge to help you prepare for studying the subject at degree level; and also cover the skills needed to study at that level, such as research skills and writing essays.

Foundation and access courses are aimed at people who don't have the formal qualifications to enter directly onto a degree course, or who have not been in formal education for a long time. For more information, contact Learndirect on 0800 100 900.

## 1.5 Funding

The **Educational Grants Advisory Service**, tel: 020 7254 6251, [www.egas-online.org.uk](http://www.egas-online.org.uk), gives information and advice on funding that may be available, including money from charities or trusts; government funding; loans; and information on what benefits you may be entitled to whilst studying.

Local authority courses may offer discounts to people over 60, but this is becoming less common. Some local authorities are removing their concessions for older learners, saying that to continue providing these would be unlawful under the age discrimination legislation. It is not possible to say whether this is the case or not. If a Local authority wanted to keep the concessions, they could argue that they were justified in doing so in order to achieve a legitimate aim; for example in order to encourage older people to access education opportunities. It would be for a court or tribunal to decide whether or not this was justified. There has not yet been a case to test this. Where concessions for people over 60 have been removed, concessions may still be available for people on low incomes – so older people who require them most should still be covered.

If you are studying for a qualification at what is called level 2 (this is equivalent to 5 GCSEs) or level 3 (equivalent to 2 A Levels) and you do not already have qualifications at this level or above, you may be eligible for an Adult Learning Grant. This is up to £30 per week, depending on your income. You should contact your college, or Learndirect, to find out if you are eligible and for details of how to apply. The upper age limit for Adult Learning Grants has now been removed.

Student loans are available to help with the cost of full time higher education. There are two types of loan, one for tuition fees and one for maintenance (living costs). You don't have to start repaying your loan until you have finished your course and you are earning above £15,000. There is no upper age limit for a student loan for fees, but to be eligible for a student loan for maintenance, you must be under 60 when you start your course. There is no requirement for you to intend to go into paid work once you have finished your course.

Bursaries, awards or training salaries may be available for some courses, in particular for vocational courses for professions such as teaching, nursing or midwifery.

If you are in work and a member of a union, contact your union to see if they can help with funding your training or education. See if your union has a Union Learning Representative who can explain your options for education or training. This could be training in the workplace, at a local college or training centre. It does not have to be related to your current job.

If your course is job-related training or education, you may be eligible for a Career Development Loan. You have to intend to go into work after completing your course. You don't have to start repaying the loan until a month after your course finishes. The government pays the interest on the loan during your course.

Learn Direct can give you more information and advice on any type of funding for education or training. See also [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) for lots of information on adult learning including what funding could be available.

## **1.6 Age discrimination**

From 1st October 2006, it is unlawful for colleges and training providers to discriminate against people on the grounds of age. The law on age discrimination means that colleges must not set age limits for their courses, unless they can justify doing this. If you think you are being refused a place on a course, or suffering any other disadvantage, because of your age, you may be able to take legal action. You may be able to get advice from your local Age Concern, or from a Citizens Advice Bureau. See Age Concern Factsheet 43 *Getting legal advice*, for information on where to get help.

The government has said that state funding for education and training, such as funding for apprenticeships, bursaries and scholarships, and student loans, is outside the scope of the age regulations. Government funding programmes therefore still include a number of age limits for entitlement. The government's interpretation of the European law on which this point is controversial and it is possible that this could be challenged through the courts.

## **2. Computers and the Internet**

Using the internet opens up access to a huge amount of information and services. You can use it for learning; either for your own research or for following a formal course, for keeping in touch with family and friends, or contacting new people who share your interests.

### **2.1 How to get started**

Many local Age Concerns offer computer training to people who have not used computers or the internet before. Contact your local Age Concern to find out what they can offer.

If you do not have a computer with internet access at home you should be able to use one for free at your local library. There may also be trained staff there who can help you to get started.

UK Online centres are another way of getting access to the internet if you've not used it before. The centres are in a variety of locations across the country including community centres, colleges, libraries and internet cafes.

It is often free to get started, but there may be a small charge for some of the services. Each centre has staff to give you all the help you need. To find your nearest UK Online centre call 0800 77 1234 (free call), or visit [www.ukonlinecentres.com](http://www.ukonlinecentres.com).

### **Age Concern England's ActivAge Unit**

The ActivAge Unit works to increase availability and use of computers among older people. Contact the Technology and Communications Team on 020 8765 7614 to speak to someone about what help is available in your area. 'If I Can You Can' is a beginner's guide to the internet produced by the ActivAge Unit. For a free copy send an A4 (large) size sae to the ActivAge Unit, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Rd, London SW16 4ER.

Silver Surfer Week will take place from 8-12 September 2008. There will be events taking place across the country which will provide taster sessions to older people to learn about the computer and the internet. You can find your nearest event by visiting [www.ageconcern.org.uk/silversurfer](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/silversurfer), or by calling 020 8765 7231 for more information.

### **AbilityNet**

AbilityNet is a national charity helping disabled people to use the internet by adapting and adjusting their technology. It offers free information and advice to individuals as well as an assessment service to identify the most suitable equipment or tools to help you use a computer at home. Information is available on the website [www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk) or by calling 0800 269 545.

## 2.2 Websites for over 50s

The Age Concern Community Website is a new site for people over 50 which offers a fun and safe way to make friends, start discussions on your favourite topics and share photos and memories with other members online. Visit [www.ageconcern.org.uk/community](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/community) to find out more.

The following list is not exhaustive, but includes some of the websites available that have been set up independently. Some may be funded through advertising on their site. Remember if you use the internet as a means of talking to and meeting people, be careful not to give personal details that may leave you vulnerable to crime.

**[www.age-net.co.uk](http://www.age-net.co.uk)** is an entertainment and information website;

**[www.hellsgeriatrics.co.uk](http://www.hellsgeriatrics.co.uk)** offers an irreverent look at life;

**[www.idf50.co.uk](http://www.idf50.co.uk)** discussion forum;

**[www.laterlife.com](http://www.laterlife.com)** includes a range of topics including special offers, travel, chat area;

**[www.pastfifty.net](http://www.pastfifty.net)** provides information and tips on getting the most out of the internet; including links to other useful and interesting sites.

**[www.seniority.co.uk](http://www.seniority.co.uk)** has topics including health, hobbies, travel, entertainment, fun and games;

**[www.silverhairs.co.uk](http://www.silverhairs.co.uk)** gives advice about computer problems and accessing the internet;

**[www.silversurfers.net](http://www.silversurfers.net)** is a website providing links to many other sites, including areas on food and drink, health and fitness, travel and holidays, finance and hobbies;

**[www.wiseowls.co.uk](http://www.wiseowls.co.uk)** is for over 45s, and is based around business and employment advice, including job vacancies.

## 3. Research

The internet has made it much easier for people to research areas of interest to them, whether this is a particular subject, local history, or your own family tree. However, you do not need internet access if you want to start your own research.

If this is the first time you want to do some research, ask your local library to show you how their systems work, so you can find the subject area for books, magazines, directories and other reference sources. Check what they have available, and how to look through their catalogues and records.

If you can't find what you want, you may want to use the library's interlending service to borrow the material you want from another library - this is usually for a small charge.

### **3.1 General Research**

Specialist libraries are worth investigating for specific material, and your local reference library will help you locate relevant ones for your area of research. The National Archives holds records of central government and the courts of law, and makes them available to all who wish to consult them. The records span an unbroken period from the 11th century to the present day, including historical manuscripts, parliamentary records, military records, and public information as it is released. They also organise events and exhibitions of some of the material they hold.

You need to apply for a reader's ticket, with two forms of identification, for the first time you use the National Archives, and orientation tours are given.

You can search the National Archives catalogue on their website and some documents are available to view online. Contact National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU, tel: 020 8876 3444, website: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

The National Library of Wales is at Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales SY23 3BU, tel: 01970 632 800, website: [www.llgc.org.uk](http://www.llgc.org.uk). The National Archives of Scotland are at Historical Search Room, HM General Register House, 2 Princes St, Edinburgh EH1 3YY, tel: 0131 535 1314, website: [www.nas.gov.uk](http://www.nas.gov.uk). The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland is at PRONI, 66 Balmoral Ave, Belfast BT9 6NY, tel: 028 9025 5905, website: [www.proni.gov.uk](http://www.proni.gov.uk).

If you have access to the internet, you can use the People's Network website, [www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk](http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk), to use a range of library services. The People's Network started as a Lottery funded project to connect every public library with the internet. It now offers additional services which can help you with your own research. The website's Enquire service allows you to ask any question via the website. A trained member of staff from the library service will then help you find the answer. The Discover service is a search engine to help you find relevant items from a range of online archives. You can also use the website to find details of local libraries.

The 24 Hour museum is a website with news, listings and other information from over 3000 museums, galleries and heritage sites in the UK. The website includes online trails which will lead you to information, photographs and links on certain subjects. [www.24hourmuseum.org.uk](http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk).

### **3.2 Family History**

Many people want to trace their family history, and only get the chance to do this when they retire. The Family Records Centre has government and other records to help you start your research.

It also offers a guide to how to get started. You can search by topics such as military records, wills, census, or by partners. You may visit the Centre at 1 Myddleton Street, London EC1R 1UW, tel: 0845 603 7788 (lo-call rate) for enquiries about certificates for births, marriages, deaths, adoptions and overseas enquiries.

For census and other general enquiries, tel: 020 8392 5300, website: [www.familyrecords.gov.uk](http://www.familyrecords.gov.uk).

The Society of Genealogists 14 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Rd, London EC1M 7BA, tel: 020 7251 8799, website: [www.sog.org.uk](http://www.sog.org.uk). Will give advice on how to approach the research. Events are held around the country where advisers are on hand.

The BBC website has information about how to get started with researching your family history. See [www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory).

### **3.3 Local studies**

If you are interested in the history and environment of your local area, or another area, you may want to research for yourself, or you may want to attend talks and events about local studies. Many libraries have a local studies section.

The British Association for Local History also produces guides and arranges visits to places that are not regularly open. Contact BALH at PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 5WH, tel: 01283 585947, website: [www.balh.co.uk](http://www.balh.co.uk).

## **4. The great outdoors**

### **4.1 Days out**

Many towns and places of interest offer guided walks, which focus on local history, architecture, famous people, or the flora and fauna of an area. Some are free, some are charged for, and these can offer an insight into your area or an area you're visiting. Your nearest tourist information centre or library will have details. A useful website is [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com) (Visit Britain is the name for the British tourism authority) to find out more about different parts of the country and their attractions for day trips or longer stays.

### **4.2 Heritage Open Days**

These are held throughout England every year over a weekend in mid-September, (11-14 September for 2008) with tours, events and walks celebrating local architecture and culture. Events include access to many places not usually open to the public. A booklet is produced giving details of all openings. Write to Heritage Open Days, The Civic Trust, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex St, London WC2R 3HU, tel: 020 7539 7918, website: [www.heritageopendays.org](http://www.heritageopendays.org). The list and online directory are available in mid-July 2008, and numbers are usually limited so it's wise to look early.

London has its own heritage weekend, which in 2008 will be on 20-21 September. London Open House also organises other tours throughout the year. Contact Open House, 4th Floor, 297 Euston Road, London NW1 3AQ, tel: 020 7383 2131, website: [www.londonopenhouse.org](http://www.londonopenhouse.org).

### **4.3 Walking**

The Ramblers' Association is a membership organisation with 500 local groups around the country. Contact it at 2nd Floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TW, tel: 020 7339 8500, website: [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk). The website gives a description of long distance and shorter paths, as well as urban walks, including the degree of difficulty.

There are 2,500 miles of national trails around the country, including the Pembrokeshire Coast Path, Hadrian's Wall Path, the Pennine Way, the Ridgeway, the Thames Path and the South West Coast Path. The website [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk), gives details of each trail.

Britain's inland waterway network was created for the beginning of the industrial revolution, connecting mines and quarries with factories, mills and ports. Now they have opened up for leisure use, for boating and walking. The British Waterways leisure website gives more information: [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com).

### **4.4 Gardening**

Simple rules can help you continue to garden throughout your life. Tidiness with tools is important to every gardener so that you can find what you need, and also to prevent accidents. Power breakers should be used on electrical tools, and cables should be organised so there is no possibility of cutting through them or tripping on them. Some tools are adapted for easier use to prevent bending down or kneeling. Be aware of poisonous plants, and always use gloves to prevent irritation from some plants and their sap.

If you have not had a tetanus injection or boost, you may want to contact your doctor, as you can get tetanus from cutting yourself on rose thorns and other garden plants.

Even a large garden can still be managed, but you can consider options of surfaces and planting. Raised beds can be easier to weed, and planting in bark or in spaces between paving can save on lots of mowing.

Planting in pots may seem attractive, but they need a lot more attention in feeding and watering than plants in beds. When buying plants, small plants are cheaper and can usually establish themselves more quickly in your garden than larger plants.

When planting, choose plants that like your soil - you can buy a cheap tester from a plant nursery or garden centre to see if your soil is acid or alkali, and from there you'll find a range of plants that thrive. Plant nurseries will always give you advice before you buy, and plant fairs are a good way of learning more about plants you like.

You may want to use planting to increase your security in the garden, for example some shrubs such as berberis and hawthorn offer prickly hedging that may deter an opportunist burglar, and fencing can act as a good screen.

If you want to grow your own, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) helps locate your nearest allotments, which may be run by allotment societies or local authorities. These have a weekly charge, and often there is a waiting list. They also help with advice to the amateur gardener, for example on pests and diseases, seasonal advice, organic gardening and finding a plant. They run events, and produce publications. Contact NSALG at O'Dell House, Hunters Rd, Corby, Northants NN17 5JE, tel: 01536 266576, website: [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk).

If you have mobility or physical difficulty with gardening, there are still ways to enjoy gardening, whether you have a small or large garden to manage, or a window box. Contact Carry on Gardening, Thrive National Office, Geoffrey Udall Centre, Beech Hill, Reading RG7 2AT, tel: 0118 988 5688, website: [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk). Thrive also has a useful website with practical advice, [www.carryongardening.org.uk](http://www.carryongardening.org.uk).

The Royal Horticultural Society runs events from the Chelsea Flower Show to smaller workshops and talks, has a membership scheme, and owns gardens around the country. To find out more, contact the RHS at 80 Vincent Square, London SW1 2PE, tel: 0845 260 5000 (lo-call rate), or for membership details 0845 062 1111 (lo-call rate), website: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk).

If you have a local horticultural college, it may offer practical help as well as advice, and if you need physical help to manage your garden, your local Age Concern may be able to put you in touch with practical help.

## **Gardens on Show**

Maybe you want to visit other gardens, or you'd welcome people visiting your own garden. The National Garden Scheme (NGS) has regional branches, and each produces the 'Yellow Book' every year, a list of all gardens open to the public on specific days. The Yellow Book costs £7.99 and is available from the NGS, or from bookshops. Most of these are private gardens, and these are useful for sharing tips as well as getting design ideas or simply to enjoy afternoon tea in a pleasant setting. All money raised from entry (usually around £2) goes to charity. Contact NGS at Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7RT, tel: 01483 211535, website: [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk).

## **5. Social life and new challenges**

Many people look forward to retirement, but it can present a sudden change to your ways of living, communicating and meeting with people. You may find yourself in a new situation in later life where you feel isolated, for example when one partner is bereaved, or when you lose contact with people when you or they move away. There are many social, cultural, religious and community centres that you may not have thought about visiting before, many of which will be local to you, and you may want to take a first step to finding out more about them from attending an event or meeting.

**Contact the Elderly** has over 200 groups nationwide, and its aim is to organise gatherings for less mobile older people who live alone.

Once a month, usually on a Sunday, volunteer drivers take a group of older people to a host's home to meet each other, make new friends and see old friends. Contact the Elderly, 15 Henrietta St, London WC2E 8QG, tel: 0800 716543 (free call), website: [www.contact-the-elderly.org](http://www.contact-the-elderly.org).

**Dark Horse Venture** is a scheme to enable people over 55 to take up something they have not tried before, with four categories of venture: giving and sharing, learning and doing, exercising and exploring, and generations working together. Contact them at St Mary's Millennium Centre, Meadow Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, L12 5EA, tel: 0151 256 8866.

**SPICE** (Special Programme of Initiative, Challenge and Excitement) is a UK wide social group for anyone seeking to do something out of the ordinary, and is for all ages over 18. Activities include hot air ballooning as well as theatre trips. Eight UK cities have a local group. For subscription details or information pack, contact SPICE UK at 13 Thorpe St, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9PR, tel: 0161 873 8788, website: [www.spiceuk.com](http://www.spiceuk.com)

**Better Government for Older People** is an initiative to ensure older people are involved in shaping policies and decisions about services such as health, lifelong learning and social services - check with your local library if there are any forums you may like to join, or see the website: [www.bgop.org.uk](http://www.bgop.org.uk) for more information about it. If you want to find out more about your local council meetings and services, consultation documents and schedules of public meetings are available at libraries, or look on your local authority website.

## **6. Arts and entertainment**

Many galleries and museums are free of charge, and many venues such as churches, community centres and concert halls have foyer exhibitions, lunchtime music and readings. Some bookshops have sessions with writers as well as book signings, and there are often outdoor events in parks, on riversides and beachfronts, which are free.

Some cinemas offer concessionary rates, usually for weekday afternoon screenings, and theatre matinees often give good group as well as individual discounts.

### **6.1 Taking part**

Local amateur dramatic societies, music societies, writers' workshops and arts groups welcome new members - check your local paper or library for details.

**The National Federation of Music Societies** offers contacts for over 2,000 music societies around the country, including choral and instrumental societies. Contact them at Making Music, 2-4 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3NW, tel: 0870 903 3780 (national call rate), website: [www.makingmusic.org.uk](http://www.makingmusic.org.uk).

## 6.2 Booking events

If you have mobility problems which make it difficult for you to get access to theatres or concert halls, or to use public transport to get to the venue, you may be eligible to use the **Shape Ticket Scheme**. This is a booking service offering discounted tickets to museums, galleries, theatres and concerts for people with disabilities. Members receive newsletters giving details of ticket offers and the organisation will cater for any seating requirements you may have. A volunteer driver escort service is available, whereby a volunteer can collect you from home, drive you to the theatre, and stay with you for the show before driving you home. Contact Shape at Dean House Studios, 27 Greenwood Place, London, NW5 1LB, tel: 0845 521 3457, minicom: 020 7424 7330, website: [www.shapearts.org.uk](http://www.shapearts.org.uk). Most of the theatres included in the scheme are located in London, although the organisation's work covers many parts of the country.

**Television and radio shows** depend on the audience for their success. As well as quiz shows where you may want to test your knowledge and perhaps win a prize, you may want to be part of the audience of your favourite programmes. Find out what's on at: [www.bbc.co.uk/tickets](http://www.bbc.co.uk/tickets) or contact BBC Studio Audiences on 0870 901 1227 (national call rate), minicom: 0141 307 5701. You can join a mailing list to be sent details of upcoming shows.

Applause Store is a free TV and radio audience ticket service, which you can use to get tickets for various production companies. Go to [www.applausestore.com](http://www.applausestore.com) or call them on 0871 987 1234.

For ITV programmes, go to [www.itv.com/beontv/tickets](http://www.itv.com/beontv/tickets), or contact your regional ITV company.

## 6.3 Reading/listening

If you haven't visited your library for a while, you may be surprised by the range of material it has, with books, large print, audio books and reference materials. Many now also offer video, DVD and CD libraries.

Audiobooks are increasingly popular, with a wide range available at libraries and bookshops. Listening books is a postal audio book library service to anyone who has an illness or disability which makes it impossible or difficult to hold a book, turn its pages, or read in the usual way. The service is available to individuals as well as organisations such as hospitals and care homes.

Write to Listening Books, 12 Lant St, London SE1 1QH, tel: 020 7234 0522 (membership services) or 020 7407 9417 (general enquiries), Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, website: [www.listening-books.org.uk](http://www.listening-books.org.uk).

The Royal National Institute of the Blind has a Talking Books service for people who cannot read standard type comfortably, and a cassette library. Contact RNIB Talking Book Service at PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS, tel: 0845 762 6843 (lo-call rate), website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk).

Talking Newspaper Association of the UK offers a service for people with visual impairment, with national and local newspapers available on audiotape, computer disk, email, internet download and CD Rom. Contact TNAUK, National Recording Centre, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8DB, tel: 01435 866102, website: [www.tnauk.org.uk](http://www.tnauk.org.uk). Travellers' Tales hires out audio books, contact The Library on Tape, Great Weddington, Ash, Canterbury, Kent CT3 2AR, tel: 01304 812531, website: [www.travellerstales.co.uk](http://www.travellerstales.co.uk).

## **7. Sports**

### **7.1 Taking part in sports**

You may want to pick up a sport you used to play, or try something new. Leisure centres, health clubs, and local sports clubs and associations are often keen to recruit new members. Your local phone directories may have sections of sports clubs.

**Ageing Well** is a health promotion programme run by the ActivAge Unit of Age Concern England that enables older people to take power in relation to their own health and to extend healthy lifestyles of their peers. Contact your local Age Concern or the ActivAge Unit (see Section 12 for details) to find out if there is a project in your area.

The **Cycle Campaign Network** has 9 regional groups which can signpost you to local advice and groups for cycling enthusiasts, whether you want an easy ride along a towpath or a more strenuous test of fitness. Contact CCN, 54-57 Allison St, Digbeth, Birmingham B5 5TH, website: [www.cyclenetwork.org.uk](http://www.cyclenetwork.org.uk).

**Extend** is a network of teachers providing movement to music for the over 60s and people with disabilities. Contact Extend, 2 Place Farm, Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8SB, tel: 01582 832760, website: [www.extend.org.uk](http://www.extend.org.uk).

**Keep Fit Association (The)** is a national governing body, with classes around the country. It can be contacted at 1 Grove House, Foundry Lane, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 5PL, tel: 01403 266 000, website: [www.keepfit.org.uk](http://www.keepfit.org.uk).

**Sport England** is the national sports development agency for England. Its Active England database gives details of sports facilities and clubs throughout England, with sports as diverse as sailing, aikido, bowls and horseriding. Contact Sport England, 3rd Floor, Victoria House, Bloomsbury Square, London WC1B 4SE, tel: 08458 508508 (lo-call rate), website: [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org).

## 7.2 Spectator

Local papers carry fixtures for the week, and these include cricket on village greens, rugby and football matches, boating events, and any sports festivals. Nationally popular events may also be free to watch, for example marathon races around the country welcome supporters along the route, and every Spring you can see the Boat Race from the banks of the Thames around Putney.

## 8. Reminiscence

This can take many forms such as discussion groups, exhibitions, making plays, creating books. If you would like to participate in an activity, you can find out about different projects around the country from Age Exchange. Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre, 11 Blackheath Village, London SE3 9LA, tel: 020 8318 9105, website: [www.age-exchange.org.uk](http://www.age-exchange.org.uk).

## 9. Volunteering

**Age Concern England's ActivAge Unit** is responsible for volunteering throughout Age Concern, the federation. It runs an intergenerational project to bring older people and children together to exchange skills, experiences and friendship in schools and other settings, for example helping children with literacy, cookery skills and art work. A key feature of their *Ageing Well* programme is the recruitment and training of older volunteers to work with their peers. See Section 12 for contact details.

**Reach** brings together voluntary organisations and experienced people who want to offer their career skills as volunteers. It recruits volunteers with managerial, technical and professional expertise to benefit voluntary organisations. Contact Reach, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP, tel: 020 7582 6543, website: [www.reach-online.org.uk](http://www.reach-online.org.uk).

**National Association of Councils for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)** will help you to locate your local VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector groups) to find out what voluntary organisations exist in your area. Contact NAVCA, The Tower, 2 Furnival Square, Sheffield S1 4QL. Tel: 0114 278 6636. [www.navca.org.uk](http://www.navca.org.uk)

**Volunteering England** can help you locate your nearest volunteer centre, which can match your needs, interests and experience with a relevant organisation to ensure you have a rewarding experience as a volunteer. If you want to set up a group, it will provide information about grants, best practice and recruitment. The website has links to organisations that are looking for volunteers.

Contact Volunteering England, Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints St, London N1 9RL, tel: 0845 305 6979 (lo-call rate), website: [www.volunteeringengland.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringengland.org.uk).

## 10. Further information - contacts

**ActivAge Unit, Age Concern England**, ActivAge Unit, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Rd, London SW16 4ER, tel: 020 8765 7200, website: [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk). The ActivAge Unit (AAU) is responsible for optimising opportunities for the participation of older people in all aspects of society in order to enhance the quality of life as people age.

Initiatives are: Volunteering 50+, Intergenerational Network, Ageing Well UK and Technology and Communications. A number of publications relating to these topics are available.

**Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)**, aims to provide free, impartial advice on a variety of subjects. The address of your local CAB can be found in the phone book or on website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk).

**deafPLUS (formerly Breakthrough)**, National Office, First Floor, Trinity Centre, Key Close, Whitechapel, London E1 4HG, tel: 020 7790 6147 (voice/fax), 020 7790 5999 (textphone), website: [www.deafplus.org](http://www.deafplus.org). A registered national charity which works with deaf and hearing people to achieve equality. It supports those with all levels of hearing loss from people who are born profoundly deaf, those deafened through trauma, to people who lose their hearing in later life.

**Disabled Living Foundation**, 380-384 Harrow Rd, London W9 2HU, tel: 0845 130 9177 (lo-call rate), website: [www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk). Has a national advice line on all issues related to disability, including leisure and equipment.

**Help the Aged (HTA)**, 207-221 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9UZ, tel: 0808 800 6565 (free call), textphone: 0800 26 96 26 (free call), website: [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk). Runs Seniorline, an advice line on all issues affecting older people, and HTA offers leaflets and publications.

**National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA)**, NAPA Administrator, Bondway Commercial Centre, 5th Floor, Unit 5.12, 71 Bondway, London SW8 1SQ, tel: 020 7078 9375, website: [www.napa-activities.co.uk](http://www.napa-activities.co.uk). Provides information for organisers of activities in care homes and day care settings.

**National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI)**, 104 New Kings Rd, London SW6 4LY, tel: 020 7371 9300, website: [www.nfwi.org.uk](http://www.nfwi.org.uk). Is the largest national women's organisation with branches around the country.

**National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)**, Renaissance House, 20 Princess Rd West, Leicester LE1 6TP, tel: 0116 204 4200, website: [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk). Is an England and Wales body to promote take-up of adult education, with older learners as one of their target groups. It organises Adult Learners Week every year.

**Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)**, 105 Judd Street, London, WC1H 9NE, website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk). Helpline gives information and advice for people with sight problems, tel: 0845 766 99 99 (lo-call rate). For enquiries about publications, equipment, games, transcription and library services, magazines, braille, large print, and tape, contact RNIB.

**Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)** has an information line, tel: 0808 808 0123 (free call), textphone: 0808 808 9000 (free call), website: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk). Contact RNID at 19-23 Featherstone St, London EC1Y 8SL.

## **11. Further information - publications from Age Concern**

### **Books and training packs**

*Feeling Good! Easy steps to staying healthy* by Dr Alan Maryon Davis. Price £9.99.

*Computing for Beginners: Get the most from your computer* by Jackie Sherman. Price £8.99.

*Everyday Computing: Improve your skills in easy steps* by Jackie Sharman. Price £8.99.

*How to be a Silver Surfer: A beginner's guide to the internet* (4th edition) by Emma Aldridge. Price £7.99.

*Your Digital Camera Made Easy: a beginner's guide* by Jackie Sherman. Price £8.99.

*Choices in Retirement* by Ro Lyon. Price £9.99.

*Reminiscence and Recall: A guide to good practice* (3rd edition) by Faith Gibson. Price £14.99.

*The Successful Activity Co-ordinator Training Pack* (2nd edition) by Rosemary Hurtley and Jennifer Wenborn. Price £25.00.

All books available by telephone orderline. (9am-7pm Monday to Friday, 10am - 5pm Saturday): **0870 44 22 120** (national call rate), or visit our **website: [www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop)** (secure online bookshop).

If ordering by post, please send a cheque or money order, payable to Age Concern England, for the appropriate amount plus p&p to Age Concern Books, Units 5 & 6, Industrial Estate, Brecon, Powys LD3 8LA.

**(Postage and packing:** mainland UK and Northern Ireland: £1.99 for the first book, 75p for each additional book up to a maximum of £7.50. Free on orders over £250. For customers ordering from outside the mainland UK & NI: credit card payments only; please telephone the hotline for international postage rates or **email:** [sales@ageconcernbooks.co.uk](mailto:sales@ageconcernbooks.co.uk)).

## 12. Further information from Age Concern

If you would like

- to find your nearest Age Concern
- any additional factsheets mentioned (up to a maximum of 5 will be sent free of charge)
- a full list of factsheets and/or a book catalogue
- to receive this information in large print

phone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ. For people with hearing loss who have access to a textphone, calls can be made by Typetalk, which relays conversations between text and voice via an operator.

Age Concern factsheets and other information materials can be downloaded free from our website at: [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk). To receive a free e-mail notification when new and updated factsheets are published, please either contact the Factsheet Subscription Service on tel: 020 8765 7200 by email: [factsheet.subscriptions@ace.org.uk](mailto:factsheet.subscriptions@ace.org.uk), or sign up on-line.

Age Concern provides factsheets free to older people, their families and people who work with them. If you would like to make a donation to our work, you can send a cheque or postal order (made payable to Age Concern England) to the Personal Fundraising Department, ACE Freepost CN1794, London SW16 4BR.

Find out more about Age Concern England online on [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

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No factsheet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Therefore please ensure that you have an up to date factsheet and that it clearly applies to your situation. Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt. (*Age Concern England is unable to give legal or financial advice*).

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